

## The Linacre Cats Protection Project 2015 final report

### Aims

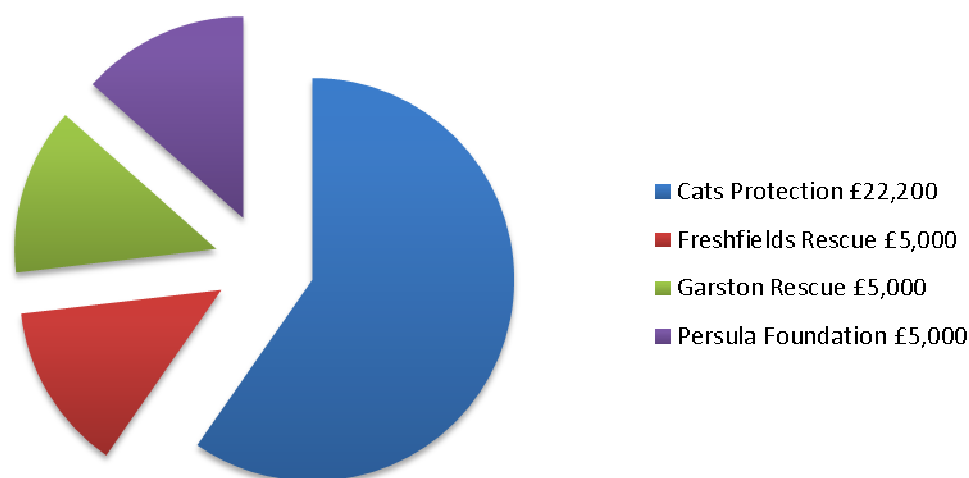
- To implement a targeted proactive neuter program for cats in the community within the postcodes of Liverpool 20, 4, 5, 6 and Liverpool 21 an area of north Liverpool and south Sefton that is acknowledged in all government statistics to be the most deprived on Merseyside.
- To provide sufficient resources to allow reactive cat neutering where need has been proven and to allow public access to a means tested neuter program across the whole of Liverpool
- To forge meaningful links with other community groups working within the postcodes through which the scheme could be pushed
- To collect and assess data on both participating households and individual felines to allow patterns to be assessed as well as guiding future plans
- To draw up a list of factors from the data that would act as indices to allow the charity to assess impact of the scheme within these areas to guide future programs
- To target the surplus cat population living on the streets and from where too many households seem to acquire their cats

### Methods

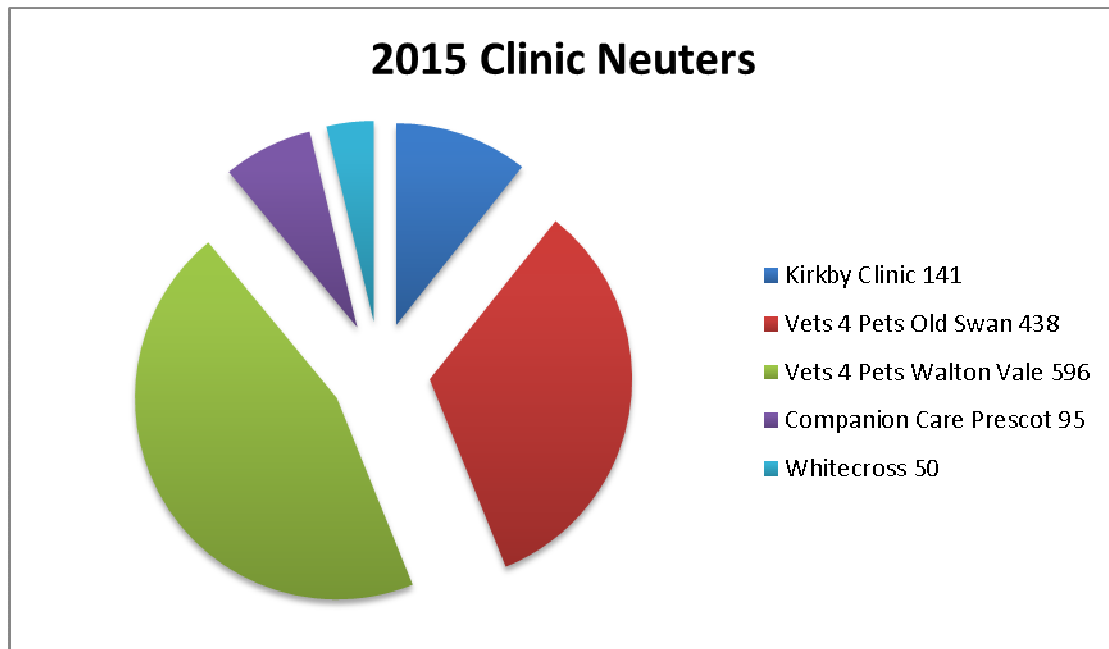
- Funding to the tune of £37,200 was obtained that it was hoped would pay for over 1000 cats to be neutered within Merseyside, including sizable numbers within the target postcodes. The charity was able to neuter 1318 cats with this sum, of which 577 fell within the Linacre target postcodes. Since the Linacre Project began, 2455 cats from the target areas have been neutered by our funders, the vast majority within the original single targeted deprived area of Liverpool 20 [976]. The 1318 cats neutered during 2015 include 1112 household domestic cats and 206 street or feral cats, representing 18.5% of the total. The 976 Liverpool 20 cats neutered equates to helping 7% of the 13,800 households inside the postcode in this outreach program. If we accept the view that one in four households own cats, then the Linacre Project has reached out to 28% of the cat owning households in Liverpool 20.



## Funding Linacre Project 2015



- Contact was established with a large number of existing community groups through the offices of Sefton Council for Voluntary Services already working with families, debt issues, advice provision, community support and social housing providers. All were provided with an outline of the project, its funders and three channels to register cats for the project. Many chose to publish the project on their websites and we asked all community groups to ensure all their staff were aware of the opportunity
- All public service outlets were given publicity material on the project that the public could access, including libraries, social service offices, meeting rooms, churches and other animal welfare bodies like the PDSA, dog wardens and RSPCA inspectorate
- The charity ran a waiting list for the period once cats were registered, the public were encouraged to register by email, by text or by landline
- Several veterinary clinics handled all the neuters professionally with good feedback between the charity and the vets including, Kirkby clinic, Vets 4 Pets Old Swan, Whitecross , Vets 4 Pets Walton Vale and Companion Care Clinic Prescott.

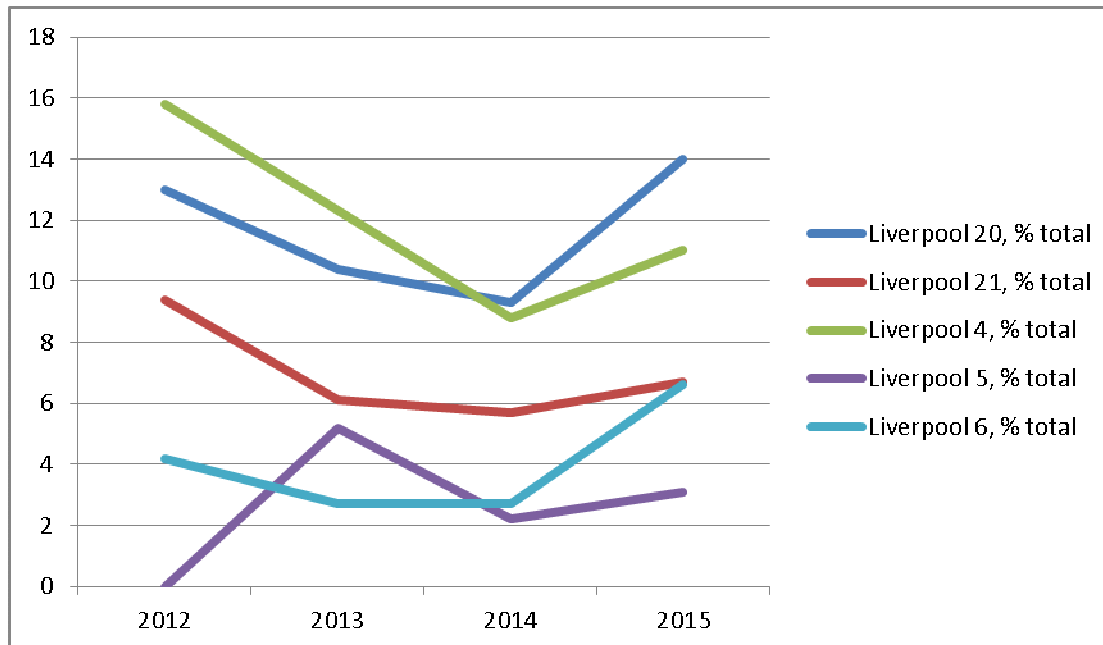
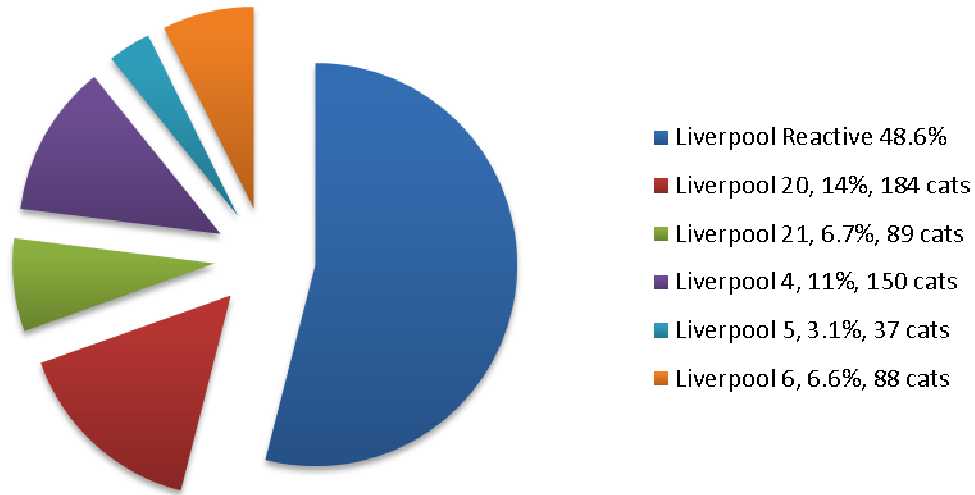


- Post- surgery problems for the clinics was minimal in what can be a challenging situation where cat recovery in often chaotic households could be expected to be difficult. Very little veterinary intervention was required after surgery. The project is indebted to the work, professionalism and flexibility of all the clinics in accommodating the Project.
- As with previous years no neutering vouchers were issued direct to households or clinics. Over 72% of the 1318 cats were collected from households, taken to clinic by the Project and returned with veterinary instructions by staff to ensure neutering was carried out. Previous attempts to issue vouchers and allow households to make the arrangements themselves have been met with failure rates of 25% and more, leaving unclaimed vouchers. Increasingly the charity has where appropriate endeavored to meet household owners at the clinic on the morning of surgery to complete paperwork and hand over to the nurses but non attendance is significantly higher than morning pick-ups where owners fail to answer the door

## Findings

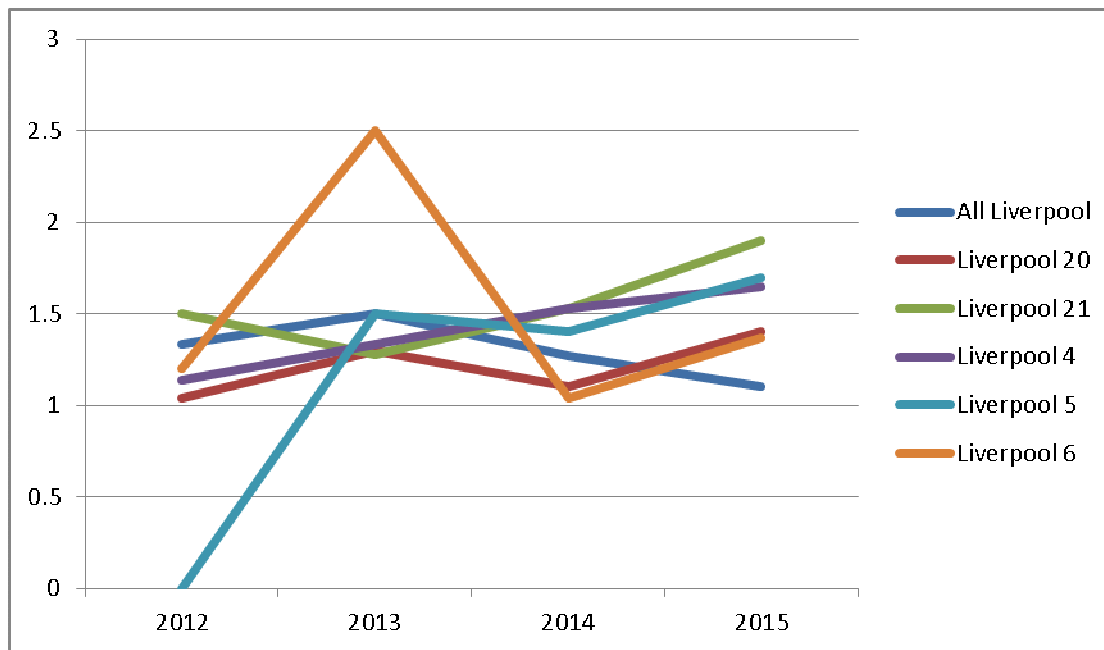
- The 2015 neuter figures included the following Linacre targeted postcode figures amounting to 43% of the Merseyside figures. Significantly all the Linacre target figures are up reflecting the shift in emphasis away from the city of Liverpool as a whole towards the target north Liverpool postcodes. Over the years both Liverpool 4 and Liverpool 20 have consistently represented over 9% of the annual figures, though the 17% figures for Liverpool 20 prior to 2008 have never been repeated. Increasingly many of the clinics across the city are signposting the public to the project when they deem a genuine need.
- The Project feels that there is a case to argue that a rise in reactive neutering outside the core target areas whilst still important, comes at the expense of proactive work within the primary postcodes and should be limited
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## Targeted Linacre Neuters



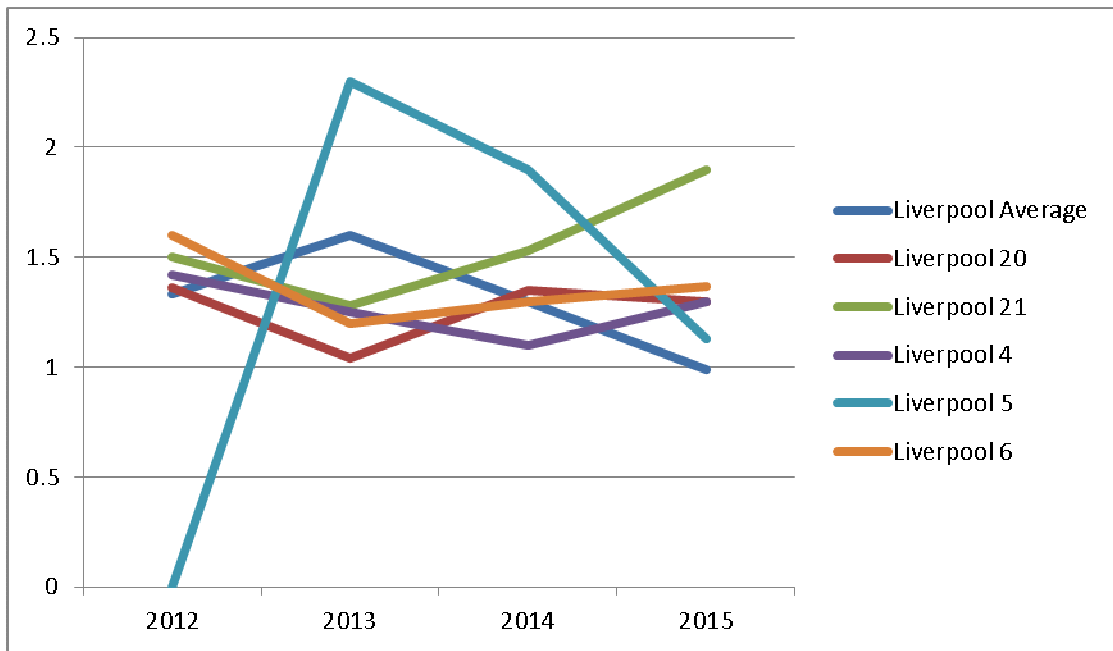
- The charity, from the beginning drew up a six points impact plan to measure and assess how effective this scheme on the ground will be. It argues that over a number of years assessment of its collated data will show reductions in age, male-female ratio, litters produced, percentage of pregnant cats etc. The charity has identified these key six areas of impact;
- **Age at neuter by gender**
- **Percentage of female pregnant or in season**

- Percentage of females already had litters at point of neuter
- Average number of litters per females done by postcode
- Percentage owned cats neutered ; percentage street cats neutered by postcode
- Percentage cats neutered living in multicat households

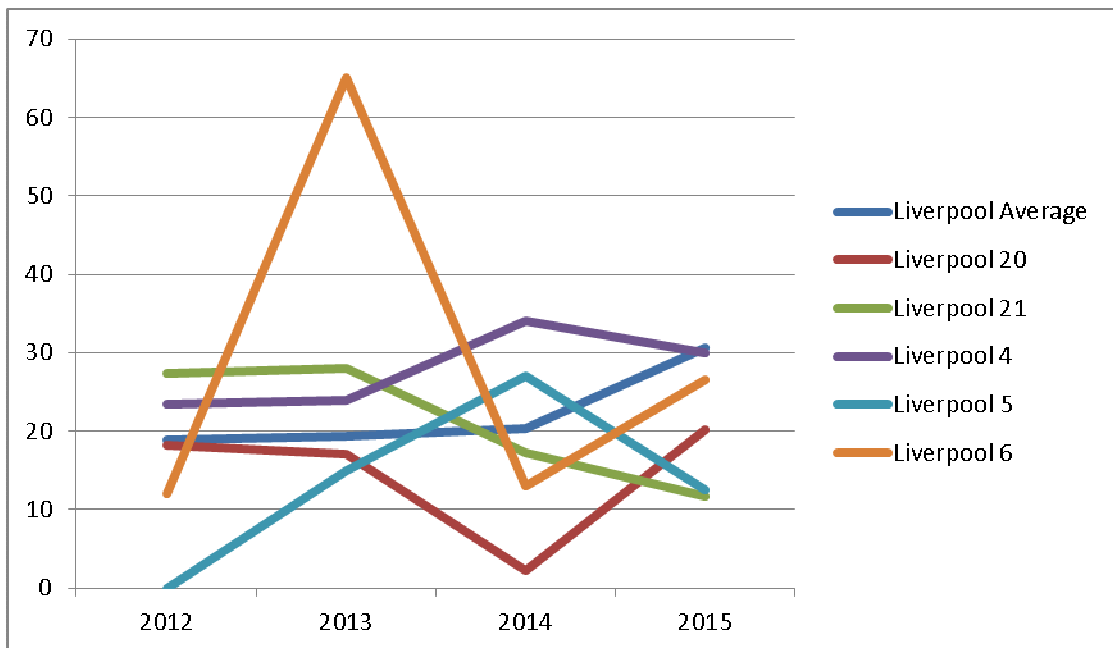


### Age at neuter, male cats 2012 to 2015

- The project works towards an early age of neutering. For most females that are unneutered by the age of 1.3, a pregnancy is unavoidable. Consistently most of the target Linacre postcodes exhibit too many adult cats being neutered above the average age for Liverpool as a whole. As a general rule, we consistently find that males are neutered at a later age than females and there is unreasonable resistance by householders to tackle male neutering



### Age at neuter, female cats 2012 to 2015



### Percentage of females pregnant or in season at neuter 2012 to 2015

- A reduction in these high figures needs to be essential in reducing feline overpopulation. The figure for Liverpool 20 has dropped from its previous high of 28.4% over several years and has remained lower than the Liverpool average for some years. It confirms the adage that at an average age of 1.3, too many female cats will already have bred

- The Project collects data on dysfunctional homes visited for access to neuter; the term indicates problems with alcohol, drugs and/or hygiene. Often these houses are multi-cat and quite chaotic houses generally with multi-agency needs. Many of them were direct referrals from other agencies. Accessing them and gaining co-operation was often challenging. The charity works on the principle of leaving the adult cats in what is often a poor environment but which will reduce the likelihood of acquiring further animals and then breeding again. Post neuter visits have affirmed this to be the case in most circumstances.

### Percentage of females already had litter at point of neuter Average number of litters per females done

	2012		2013		2014		2015	
<b>Merseyside av</b>	<b>35.4%</b>	<b>0.65</b>	<b>38.2%</b>	<b>0.8</b>	<b>33%</b>	<b>0.6</b>	<b>35%</b>	<b>0.6</b>
<b>Liverpool 20</b>	<b>30.6%</b>	<b>1.29</b>	<b>22.6%</b>	<b>0.4</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>0.45</b>	<b>22.3%</b>	<b>0.75</b>
<b>Liverpool 21</b>	<b>54.9%</b>	<b>0.84</b>	<b>23.3%</b>	<b>0.6</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>0.39</b>	<b>31.3%</b>	<b>0.52</b>
<b>Liverpool 4</b>	<b>54.7%</b>	<b>0.66</b>	<b>30.9%</b>	<b>0.53</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>0.47-</b>	<b>31.3%</b>	<b>0.78</b>
<b>Liverpool 5</b>	-	-	<b>38%</b>	<b>0.89</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>0.36</b>	<b>41.6%</b>	<b>0.9</b>
<b>Liverpool 6</b>	<b>61%</b>	<b>1.1</b>	<b>19.5%</b>	<b>0.28</b>	<b>53%</b>	<b>1.0</b>	<b>24.4%</b>	<b>0.4</b>

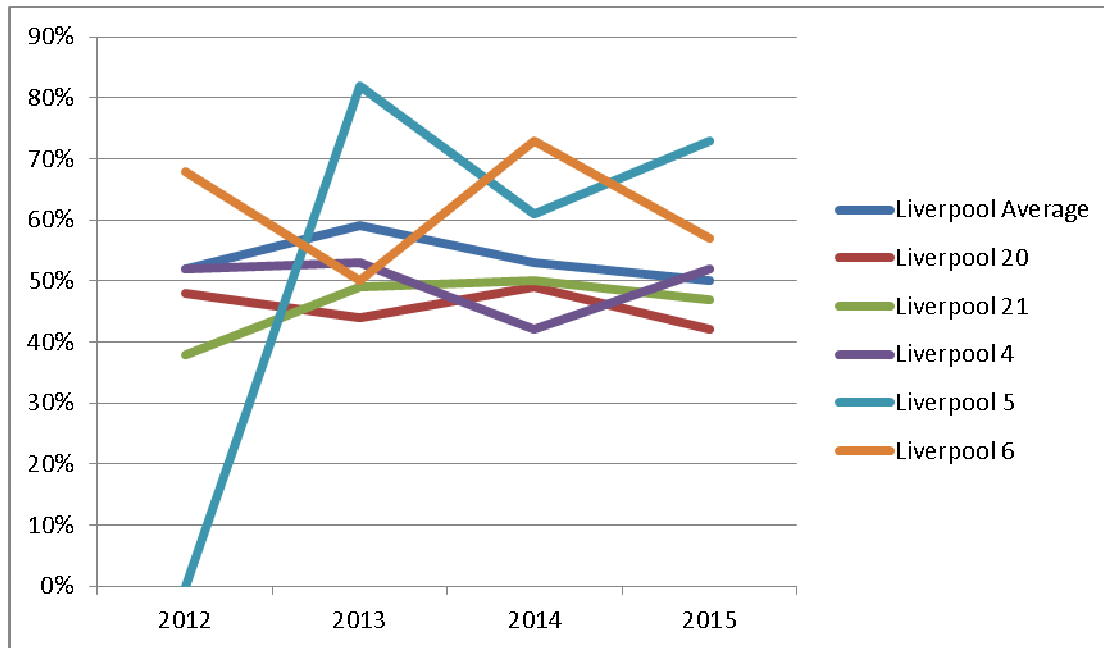
- Ideally both of these figures should register low numbers and percentages. Liverpool 20 stood at 40.7% of females having already been bred prior to neuter in 2011 and has remained below 27% for three years and the average number of litters per female has dropped from its high of 1.9 to below 0.8 for the last three years. In other words cat breeding in Liverpool 20 was so high that when calculated it meant that on average each female the Project was dealing with had already had nearly two litters. Both results confirm reduced breeding rates in these wards and together with some of the other data here suggestive of project impact

### Percentage owned cats neutered; Percentage street cats neutered

	Own		Str		Own		Str		Own		Str	
<b>Merseyside av</b>	<b>75%</b>	<b>25%</b>			<b>72%</b>	<b>28%</b>	<b>79%</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>85%</b>	<b>15%</b>		
<b>Liverpool 20</b>	<b>85%</b>	<b>15%</b>			<b>84%</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>76%</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>85%</b>	<b>15%</b>		
<b>Liverpool 21</b>	<b>91%</b>	<b>9%</b>			<b>80%</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>80%</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>0%</b>		
<b>Liverpool 4</b>	<b>80%</b>	<b>20%</b>			<b>80%</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>77%</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>85%</b>	<b>15%</b>		
<b>Liverpool 5</b>	-	-			<b>42%</b>	<b>58%</b>	<b>53%</b>	<b>47%</b>	<b>79%</b>	<b>21%</b>		
<b>Liverpool 6</b>	<b>63%</b>	<b>37%</b>			<b>68%</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>95%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>72%</b>	<b>28%</b>		
	<b>2012</b>		<b>2013</b>		<b>2014</b>		<b>2015</b>					

- Initial data collection in previous years proved that in Liverpool 20 over 32% of households got their cat from the street. The Project was surprised by this finding but targeted street cats and feral cats for that reason. It is widely accepted by welfare professionals that

Liverpool has a huge feral cat problem that is tackled with too few resources. A consequence of this is the larger unneutered household cat numbers derived from the street. Tackling overbreeding in a given area has firstly to tackle the number on the streets.



### Percentage of cats from households owning over three cats 2012 to 2015

- The data clearly indicates the prevalence of breeding and being unable to follow through with a plan to ensure any offspring can be accommodated elsewhere. Instead the offspring end up remaining in the same household and the household then realises they require intervention to ensure the same situation does not occur
- It cannot be stressed how surprising the charity found the almost complete lack of existing contact, households in the target areas had with other animal health professionals. Only twelve households had cat flaps installed. Only 3.4% of the total had already vaccinated their cats. Only 4.7% had registered their cat to a private practice. Another 3% of cats were registered to the pdsa clinics in the city. Fifteen owners had previously chipped their cats. Any regard to these figures must conclude that well over 90% of the households worked with had no prior access to advice, guidance and experience from welfare professionals. In many of these postcodes access to private practice clinics was limited. There has never been a vet practice in Liverpool 20. There are no vet practices in Liverpool 6 or Liverpool 5. It is left to a PDSA clinic to serve these three postcodes. It could be argued that part of the solution long term does require veterinary investment within these areas. As it is, it unfortunately is left to charity investment with low resources to provide a lead

### Where household cats are obtained from?

Area 2012	Bred	Family/friend	Street	Pet shop	internet
Liverpool Average	23%	25%	29.5%	7%	5%
Liverpool 20	15.6%	40.2%	23.8%	10.4%	
Liverpool 21	22.7%	35.2%	22.7%	4%	
Liverpool 4	18.3%	21.9%	31.7%	15.2%	
Liverpool 5	--	-	-	-	



Liverpool 6	17%	23.5%	41%	10-%	
Liverpool Av 2013	21.5%	19.1%	35%	6.4%	9.7%
Liverpool 20	7.8%	32.1%	26%	8.6%	
Liverpool 21	11.9%	31.2%	40%	4.4%	
Liverpool 4	14.7%	23.3%	27%	15.4%	
Liverpool 5	29%	10%	50%	-	
Liverpool 6	17%	28%	34%	17%	
Liverpool Av 2014	25%	28%	29%	4%	9%
Liverpool 20	24%	20%	26%	3%	13%
Liverpool 21	17%	33%	34%	7%	8%
Liverpool 4	20%	24%	32%	8%	13%
Liverpool 5	26%	20%	29%	-	20%
Liverpool 6	48%	24%	17%	-	-
Liverpool Av 2015	18%	25%	30%	5%	20.5%
Liverpool 20	17%	34%	32%	4%	11%
Liverpool 21	23%	37%	16%	4%	17%
Liverpool 4	18%	21%	33%	16%	11%
Liverpool 5	32%	21%	27%	13%	8%
Liverpool 6	9%	20%	54%	5%	10%

- If the project does not know where cats are acquired from it cannot tackle root causes. Access to the Project allows guidance to a social grouping where it is self evident there has been no access to welfare professionals previously. Breeding within the household can be tackled by the Project's doorstep approach. Its street work can and will reduce the availability of young cats to households that never really wanted a cat in the first place. Please note here that the notion of street obtained cats in this table refers to ferals, strays and abandoned cats that have not been taken in for rehoming by welfare organisations. It should be stressed that a large number of these street derived cats simply arrive on a doorstep, feeding by the household commences and the cat has moved in. Family and friend derived cats will always be a factor but it is important to stress that this is the predominant medium along with the word and praise of neighbours by which the Project has spread its message and enabled its work to progress on difficult estates. Working with the community has been integral to its success. The rise of the Internet sold kittens is simply astonishing, from a mere 5% in 2012 and frankly, simply unrecorded prior to this year to 20% in 2015
- Equally confounding is the sheer prevalence of street acquired cats in households still after working over many years to reduce the level of feral colonies. Liverpool 20 has not registered below the figure of 24% for the last five years. So at least 24% of the cats the Project is called out to sterilize in Liverpool 20 has been brought in off the street by the householder. Indeed the Liverpool average across the city fails to fall below 29%

## Conclusions

- The charity commenced an intensive blanket neuter program within the postcode of Liverpool 20, with the assistance of external funders and working on the ground with voluntary and professional community agencies in 2009. It has taken its method of working and now applied it to other deprived north Liverpool areas
- Its modus operandi has proved to be essential. All the data indicates a clear lack of advice, guidance, contact of any kind with vet health professionals. Only the PDSA operate on the ground, there are few private vet clinics in all targeted postcodes. There is clear evidence

that whole communities are by passed unwittingly until a project like this is taken into the community as a whole. Not surprisingly the community then responds positively

- It is indeed unfortunate that where social deprivation is so endemic, cat neutering is at the bottom of the heap. There is no way round this other than to make provision for it. The charity has always believed that animal ownership should be universal, but there needs to be provision and support
- It is clear that because there has been too little intervention by the third sector [this charity has been working on the ground within L20 well before 2009 but with too little resourcing] there are too many felines within the postcodes. The excessive breeding supplies households within the community, the street's excess further adds to household pet ownership, in all of this there is never the opportunity to encounter a structured pet adopting entity like the RSPCA or Cats Protection shelter outside the postcode and then be guided, to have input into the needs of cat ownership. The community as a whole knows little else but to continue the cycle of breeding. Supply within the community has outstripped demand. Intervention like this is crucial to breaking that cycle for the future
- The data collated from L20 over the years on nearly 1,000 cats and households in such a small geographical area is starting to suggest the beginnings of impact. By looking at key figures and trends from the above tables this charity can start to show measurable change. That these trends need to be replicated over the next couple of years is self-evident and without that proof it would be difficult to be absolutely clear about impact within the postcode of Liverpool 20
- That the project must continue on the ground over a number of years is clear. The Project envisages at least another five years of working in this way with these communities. It is important that the data is analysed comprehensively annually to guide priorities. It is crucial that the charity continues to collate data that can be analysed annually to guide its approach
- It is proposed that the Project focuses more on the designated postcodes at the expense of the whole of Liverpool. The Project was set up as a proactive body not a reactive body and there are already other outlets available for Merseyside as a whole from which vouchers can be obtained including Cats Protection, RSPCA and PDSA, The Linacre Project can signpost households to them
- The Linacre scheme will focus on Liverpool 20, 21, 4, 5, 6 and 7,
- The Linacre Project will still undertake work with street/community cats across Liverpool
- The Linacre Project has undertaken to look at the feasibility of starting a Speke Cat Neuter Project in south Liverpool for 2016 and to address the logistics of starting such a scheme. It produced a feasibility assessment for Cats Protection at the end of 2015 and it has been decided that meetings in the late Spring will take place with all interested parties where other targeting within the city of Liverpool will take place

## Acknowledgements

None of this work would have started without the patient support of all our funders; Cats Protection, Garston Cat Rescue and Persula Foundation. Nor would it have progressed without the keenness and generosity of the private vet clinics who have agreed to reduce their prices to do this work; Companion Care at Prescot, Whitecross vets, Megan and Rachel's team at Vets 4 Pets Old Swan, Catherine's team at the Kirkby vet clinic and David and Sara's team at Vets 4 Pets Walton Vale. Thanks to you all.